A String of Pearls.

BY ELIZA F. POLLARD, AUTHOR OF "ROGER THE RANGER," ETC.

CHAPTER XI.

MARJORY AND THIRZA.

"YOU must not be angry with Jack, Queenie. He did not mean to hurt me, I'm sure," said Noel, throwing his arms round Marjory's neck, as she knelt beside his sofa.

"Oh! my darling, my darling! If I had only known!" she sighed, encircling him in her arms.

"What good would it have done you, Queenie?" said Sarah. "After staying away all these months, to miss passing your examination would have been too bad; you had had disappointment enough in losing that will. The doctors all assured me there was no danger, and Noel walked across the room to-day quite comfortably. Mr. Markham thinks that in a week our boy will not know anything has ever been wrong. Of course, there is the expense, but Mr. Dobson says he'll arrange that."

Marjory sighed. "To think there is all that money which ought to be ours, and we shall never have any of it!" she said.

"Never mind, Queenie dear," said Noel, laying his face caressingly against hers. "We shall do very well without it. When I am a man I shall work for you and Sarah. Do you know I am going to be an artist?" He spoke so triumphantly, as if to be an artist were the simplest thing in the world.

"An artist!" repeated Marjory. "And who has put that idea into your head?"

"Thirza," said the boy, smiling; and then seeing the astonishment expressed in his sister's face, he added, "But I forgot, you do not know her—she is the most beautifullest girl you ever saw, and oh! so good and kind. She's sat by me every day, nearly all day long, and taught me to make these," and he drew a box towards him, out of which he produced several wax figures most neatly modelled. "She says," continued Noel, eagerly, not noticing his sister's silence, "that I am very clever; she never knew a little boy learn so quickly."

"And where is this Thirza?" asked Marjory.

"Ah! that's just the dreadful thing," answered Noel, tears gathering in his eyes. "She's gone away—no one knows where. She went yesterday, and Mrs. Marshall is in great trouble; so were we, only your coming home made us forget a little."

"Did this Thirza know I was coming home?" asked Marjory.

"Of course, I told her all about you—how you had gone over to Paris to get that money, and how the will was lost and the beautiful string of pearls. I think she was very sorry, for if ever I spoke of it she looked so sad, and once she said, 'Tell your sister when she comes home that they will be found some day—they are sure to be found some day—if only she will wait and be patient.'"

"Yes, those were her very words," said Sarah. "Curious, wasn't it? What should she know about the matter?"

"What, indeed?" thought Marjory, and she was going to tell all she knew of this Thirza, when some

"She fell down at Queenie's feet." p. 179.

instinct checked her. A feeling of pity, such as she had never felt before, crept into her heart. She remembered Madame Charles, and the comfortless, unholy home which had been Thirza's—no love, no guidance, no hope in the present or the future, poor and lonely. If she had sinned, maybe she *would*—nay, maybe she *had*—repented. Did not her message intimate as much? "Yes, I will wait," thought Marjory. "I should hate that money if it caused another girl's ruin."

"Well, we will hope her words will come true," she said, carelessly. "And now, when are we going home? I shall have to face Mrs. Bradley some day—the sooner it is over the better."

"Seeing you have not got the money, she'll not nag at you," said Sarah. "She was very good to Noel after you left—sent for him time and again to play with the vicarage children, and came down herself to see him when she heard of his accident. The Vicar brought the low pony carriage to take him to the station, and then carried him into the railway carriage."

"Everybody is good to us," said Marjory, and she repeated softly, "We have friends—how then shall I not think of the friendless?"

That afternoon Mr. Dobson came to see her and told her that Sir James Fleming had decided to foreclose.

"He doubts the existence even of the will; that the pearls have been stolen or disposed of, he thinks possible; I myself do not know what to say. The police have visited all the pawnbrokers' shops, and kept a strict look-out upon all the models who frequented Mr. Harcroft's studio, but can find no trace. I am inclined to believe that that girl Thirza is either in possession of them or knows where they are. She ran away from Paris some time ago."

"Do you know where she went?" asked Marjory, thinking he might have heard of her through Noel.

"No, how should I?" he answered.

"Then let Sir James Fleming take the money," said Marjory, though even as she said it the bitterness of the disappointment came forcibly upon her. "Thirza is only a girl like myself, and has worse than no home. I could not bear to be made rich by her ruin; let the matter drop."

"For the present it may be as well; we have no proofs," said Mr. Dobson, regretfully; and then he took leave of her.

The following day, Sarah, Marjory, and Noel went back to Barston; and when Marjory saw again the thatched cottage embowered in its summer wealth of flowers, and Mother Colley standing ready to receive them in the clematis-covered porch, her heart leapt within her—everything was so pure, so beautiful! then, like a vision, she saw Thirza's home, the Paris Mansarde, unclean, impure, and the words rose to her lips, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Poor Thirza!

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It was still quite early when the train from Dieppe steamed into the Gare St. Lazare, but Philip Fleming had been waiting some time. The young man's face was looking serious and anxious, but an involuntary light came into his eyes when he caught sight of Thirza amongst the travellers, and never before had he felt such an acute sensation of mingled pleasure and pain as she held out her hand to him, saying in English, almost devoid of the foreign accent—

"This is good of you, Monsieur Philip."

Somehow he could not answer her, he only said, "Give me your key; I will see to your box at the Customs."

"I have no box," she answered, "only this," and she showed him a travelling bag she was carrying in her hand.

"Where are you going?" he asked, almost roughly.

She looked at him astonished, and answered quietly, "I would speak to you first. At this early hour the restaurants are empty; take me to one."

In that moment he became aware that the girl Thirza no longer existed, she had become a woman. He noticed with pain the dark rims round her eyes, and the sorrowful droop of the beautiful mouth. Putting her arm in his, they walked silently out of the station.

An hour later, sitting over their rolls and coffee in a little back room at a neighbouring restaurant, Thirza told Philip her story.

"I could not stay with her, for I know she has those pearls, and I was afraid of meeting that fair girl you call Marjory, but her brother calls her 'Queenie.' It is a miracle that I should go to him when I ran away from her," she added, dreamily.

"It is strange," said Philip. "But what will you do now? You have no proof that your aunt took those pearls."

"I know she did," answered Thirza, "and I will frighten her; I will threaten to denounce her."

"Wait!" said Philip. The remembrance of Marjory's visit to Madame Charles came back to him. "Before you do anything, go and see your cousin Léonie; she may be able to help you. Tell her all; she is Marjory's friend. But you are tired, you ought to rest," he added, seeing her lie back in her chair wearily, and pass her hand across her brow.

"I will not rest till this work is finished," she said, passionately; and then, tears gathering in her eyes, she looked at him and added, "Monsieur Philip, you never thought I had taken them?"

"Never, Thirza, on my honour," answered Philip, in a low voice, laying his hand on hers.

"That is well," she answered, smiling through her tears; "now I will work, and afterwards—"

"What will you do afterwards?" asked Philip.

"Ah, how can I tell?" she answered, "I am alone;" and rising quickly, she said, "I will go to Léonie."

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Arm in arm Léonie and Thirza were pacing up and down the recreation grounds of the Institution Lambert.

"And you say she told Marguérite she would find them in a black box?" said Thirza, slowly.

Léonie nodded.

"The only black box in her possession is my box; I left it in my attic. Léonie, she has put the pearls there because of the police; if they are found, I shall be deemed the thief."

"And if you denounce her, she will laugh in your face; she will tell the police where to find them, and how she was silent to screen you. She will be quite pathetic," and Léonie laughed a little hard laugh.

But Thirza did not laugh, she had grown quite pale;

it seemed as if all her courage had suddenly left her. "A thief," she said. "Oh, mother!" and she burst into tears.

"Come, come," said Léonie, "we will outwit her yet, though she is so wicked, and my dear Marguérite shall have her pearls, and you shall be happy; you two beautiful ones will see how the 'ugly duckling' can be of use," and she kissed and petted Thirza. "You have nowhere to go," she continued. "I will ask Madame to let you sleep in my bed and I will go home, I have an idea."

So Thirza slept that night in the Institution Lambert.

CHAPTER XII.

UNITED.

"WHAT has brought you home, Léonie?" were the not very gracious words with which her aunt greeted her, when she made her appearance at the door of her lodgings, late in the afternoon of the same day.

"I've not been feeling well lately," answered Léonie, "I've been over-worked, so Madame said I might come home to-night."

Madame Charles grunted. "Rest! Do you mean to say you are going to sleep here?" she asked, leading the way into the little, close bed-sitting-room.

"Yes," said Léonie. "Don't be cross, aunt; you know I'm not difficult, you can put me up anywhere. It's so nice to get away from school," and she threw herself into a shabby, old arm-chair, none of the cleanest.

Now, if Madame Charles had a weakness, it was for Léonie. She had made money out of Thirza, her brother's child, but she feared, almost hated her, even as she had hated her English mother. Charles Grimaldi, sculptor, had met Ada Compton in Rome, had fascinated her, and had married her for her money; when that was gone, he had forsaken her, left her dying of consumption in Paris, a charge on his sister, who with an eye to business promised to look after the child. How she kept this promise we have seen.

"Well, I suppose you must stay as you are here," she grumbled; "your mother must get a bed for you."

"No need; have you let Thirza's room?" said Léonie.

"No, I thought she might come back. See what she costs me, and then they say I was not good to the girl."

"No one says so," answered Léonie. "I can sleep in her room, then?"

"Yes, there's no reason why you should not; I shall give it up next week, and sell the furniture."

"That's settled," said Léonie, cheerfully. "Now what have we for dinner?"

"Nothing, unless your mother brings something in, and she won't be home till late."

"Then I'll go and get the dinner," said Léonie, "I've got a little money."

Léonie knew her aunt's weak point, excessive greediness, and she managed to provide an unusually tasty meal, which resulted in good temper and sleepy loquaciousness.

"Now, aunt, we are tired. Give me the key of Thirza's room and some sheets. I'll go to bed, I'm dropping with sleep," said Léonie, about ten o'clock.

The old woman took a bunch of keys out of her pocket, and singling one out, said, "That's it," adding, "You'll be careful to give it me back to-morrow, Léonie."

"When I go back to the Institution you mean," answered the girl. "Good-night, aunt, good-night," and she went her way.

Léonie's plain face, lighted by a little lamp, was almost beautiful as she knelt beside the black box in Thirza's attic.

Around her lay the pictures which her cousin had thrown in at the last; but in her hand she held a crumpled sheet of paper, from which she had just taken a string of unusually large and beautiful pearls.

Tears were in the girl's eyes, and she trembled with emotion.

"My dearest *will* be glad," she said, softly, and a glow of unselfish happiness overspread her face.

She slept with the pearls under her pillow all that night, and was at the Institution Lambert before the eight o'clock breakfast. Thirza was watching for her.

"All right, there they are. Now be off as quick as you can," she said, putting the packet into Thirza's hand. "I wish I could go with you, but tell my dearest that Léonie found them."

"I will, indeed," said Thirza.

"Go quickly," said Léonie, "you are not safe with them on this side of the water. I have sent a telegram to Monsieur Philip," and she hurried her away out of the house, saying, "I will explain to Madame."

Philip was of Léonie's opinion that Thirza, with those tell-tale pearls about her, was not safe. "I will go as far as Calais with you," he said. "Give them to me."

"You will not write to the lawyer or that other gentleman till I have given them to her?" were Thirza's last words, as Philip bade her farewell.

"I will be silent," he answered. "By the by, Thirza, if I have occasion to write to you, I do not know your surname or address. Write them for me," and he gave her his pocket-book and pencil.

"Now good-bye," she said.

"'Grimaldi,'" repeated Philip, as he left the boat. "Where have I heard that name?"

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"Thirza! here's *my* Thirza!" and Noel ran out into the road and clasped his arms round a tall young girl, who had stopped and was looking curiously at the Toll Cottage.

She was very white and tired. It had been a long, hot walk from the station, and for the last week Thirza had known little rest.

"Is your Queenie here?" she asked in a low voice, stooping and caressing the boy.

"Queenie! of course she's here. Oh! Thirza, why did you run away?" and taking her hand, he led her up the garden walk towards the door, calling out at the top of his voice, "Queenie! come quickly, here's Thirza."

And Queenie was standing in the porch, looking so fresh and bright, with a smile upon her lips, seeming to say, "I knew you would come some day;" and the tired wayfarer lifted her eyes, and stretching out her hands with something in them, murmured, "I have come to bring you this," and having uttered the words, she fell down at Queenie's feet.

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"She is quite out of danger. Dr. Markham says she will recover rapidly in the fresh country air. How serious you look, Mr. Fleming! Do you not believe me?" said Marjory.

"Of course I believe you," answered Philip. "I was thinking how Thirza must have suffered to have been brought thus low. Of course, she has told you the whole story."

"No, she has not been able to; but I had a letter from Léonie, telling me the pearls were found in a black box in Thirza's attic. I am so sorry, but it was good of her to bring them back."

"You think she stole them?" exclaimed Philip, indignantly.

Marjory looked astonished. "How else should she know where to find them?" she said.

Then Philip told her that Madame Charles had taken the pearls the day she was in the studio, quickly, secretly. Thirza had at once suspected her, on which, to screen herself, the old woman had imagined hiding them in Thirza's box. "She went over to Paris to make her aunt give them up by threatening her with the police, but Léonie remembered what Madame Charles had said to you, and looked for and found them."

"I am so glad," said Marjory. "Poor Thirza, I will beg her pardon as soon as she is well enough to understand."

"She will not be 'poor Thirza' long," said Philip, smiling, "for it has been found out that she is Sir James Fleming's niece and heiress; her mother, Ada Compton, being his half-sister; his mother, Lady Fleming, having married a second time. After his mother's death he lost sight of this half-sister; why, in her trouble, she never applied to him is a mystery, probably she was ashamed of her marriage. But as soon as Thirza is well enough Sir James is coming to fetch his niece home."

"Oh! I am so glad, so glad," said Marjory. "It is like a fairy tale, and she has been so good and true."

"She has indeed," answered Philip, with emotion, as he turned away.

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"My darling, I have always loved you," said Philip, "and now, thank God, I can tell you so and ask you to be my dear wife. What answer will you give me, Thirza?"

They were standing together in the conservatory at Framley Hall, Sir James Fleming's place, where, as soon as she was sufficiently recovered from her long illness, Thirza had been brought in company of Marjory and Noel; and the old house had once more heard the sound of young voices and merry laughter. Lady Fleming had been dead some years, and Sir James was glad to have his solitude broken in upon, and spoilt the young people beyond measure. It was truly Liberty Hall. So Philip had come courting Thirza, and now awaited her answer amidst the flowers.

"And my past?" she said in a low voice, colouring deeply.

"It was not of your making," he answered.

She raised her head, looked at him steadily, and said—"My mother bade me keep myself 'unspotted from the world.' I have striven to do so."

"I know you have, my darling. Say 'yes' quickly, Thirza," and Philip held out his arms to her.

She crept into them, and so answered him.

On Thirza's wedding day she found a red jewel-case on her toilet table, and, opening it, she saw the costly string of pearls, with the words, "From Marjory and Noel." Then that crumpled bit of paper proved to be the lost will. So all went "merry as the marriage bells."

Sir James Fleming did not begrudge the orphans their heritage, but constituted himself their guardian and protector, and Framley Hall became their home.

The Toll Cottage was let, and Sarah came as housekeeper to the Hall, with her old mother, and was very proud of her children's prosperity.

So the shadows passed away, and the orphans knew that their Heavenly Father had indeed had them in His keeping, and that their wealth was but a trust, to be used for His glory.

"Father of all, to Thee
We breathe unuttered fears,
Deep hidden in our souls,
That have no voice but tears.
Take Thou our hand, and through the wild
Lead gently on each trustful child!"

THE END.

MAKING CHILDREN HELPFUL.

THERE is no greater mistake than in bringing up children to feel that they must be taken care of and waited upon by others, without any corresponding obligations on their part. The extent to which young children can be made useful in a family would seem surprising to those who have never a systematic and regular plan for utilising their services.

The writer has been in a family where a little girl of eight or nine years of age washed and dressed herself and young brother, and made their small beds before breakfast (it is better to leave the beds till after breakfast, and so give them a chance to air), set and cleared all the tables for meals, with a little help from a grown person in moving tables and spreading cloths; while all the dusting of parlours and chambers was also neatly performed by her. A brother of ten years old brought in all the coal used in the kitchen and parlour, brushed the boots and shoes, went on errands, and took all the care of the poultry. They were children whose parents could afford to hire servants to do this, but who chose to have their children grow up healthy and industrious, while proper instruction, system, and encouragement made these services rather a pleasure than otherwise to the children.

Some parents pay their children for such services; but this is hazardous, as tending to make them feel that they are not bound to be helpful without pay, and also as tending to produce a hoarding, money-making spirit. But when children have no hoarding propensities, and need to acquire a sense of the value of property, it may be well to let them earn money for some extra services rather as a favour. When this is done, they should be taught to spend it for others, as well as for themselves; and in this way a generous and liberal spirit will be cultivated; while their self-reliance and helpfulness will be rightly fostered.

H. B. S.

From a Photograph by] The Queen's Kitchen. [*H. N. King, Shepherd's Bush.*

CHRISTMAS IN THE KITCHEN.

THERE is always a little extra bustle in the kitchen at Christmas time, when mothers all over the land are busily preparing dainty dishes, sweet and savoury, in honour of the great winter festival. And though none of us may have so grand a kitchen as that over which the Queen's chef presides, yet we are quite sure that even the richest and rarest dainties prepared for the royal table will not be one whit more appreciated than the homeliest fare prepared by mother's loving hands for the Christmas feast of her own household.

With a view to helping our readers in their Christmas cooking, we append a few seasonable recipes, all of which have been tried in our own kitchen, and we have every confidence in recommending them.

Stuffing for a Turkey.

Mix 6 ozs. of bread-crumbs with the peel of a lemon chopped very fine, a dessertspoonful of chopped, savoury herbs, 3 ozs. of finely chopped beef suet, pepper and salt. Bind it with a well-beaten egg.

Plum Pudding.

Half pound of chopped suet, 1 lb. currants, 1 lb. Valencias, stoned and cut in half; 1 lb. sultanas, 1 lb. sugar, 1 lb. flour, 1 lb. bread-crumbs, ½ lb. candied peel, the grated rind of a lemon, nutmeg, ginger, or ground cinnamon; four teaspoonfuls baking powder, four to eight eggs. Boil or steam eight hours.

Sauce for Pudding.

One ounce flour, 1 oz. butter, ½ pint milk and water mixed, two teaspoonfuls sugar. Put flour and butter into a saucepan, mix smooth with wooden spoon over gentle heat, and add the liquid gradually, stirring all the time. Boil for three minutes and then add the sugar.

Mince Meat.

Half pound beef suet, chopped very fine, without flour; 1 lb. Valencias, 1 lb. sultanas, 1 lb. currants, 1 lb. sugar, ½ lb. mixed candied peel, 1½ lb. juicy apples, 2 ozs. chopped sweet almonds, and a few bitter almonds, the grated rind of a lemon, and a little juice; one teaspoonful of spice, nutmeg, and ginger.

Puff Paste for Mince Pies.

Take 7 ozs. of Vienna flour, and 4 ozs. of butter; cut up the butter lightly in the flour, add the beaten whites of two eggs, with sufficient water to make it into a paste. Roll carefully out, giving it only one turn, and it is finished.

Rock Cakes.

Take 1 lb. of flour, rub in 6 ozs. of good dripping or butter (the latter preferred), then add ¼ lb. of sultanas, 2 ozs. of peel cut fine, 3 ozs. of moist sugar, and 3 teaspoonfuls of baking powder. Mix all these well together, then beat up three eggs and mix *very* dry. Use a little milk if the eggs are not sufficient. Lift rough pieces with a fork, put them on a sheet tin which has been well greased, and bake in a *hot* oven until of a golden colour. If mixed too thin, the cakes will run and be flat.

A Wholesome Drink for a Children's Party.

Wash and wipe quite dry two lemons. Grate the yellow rind into a jug, then squeeze the juice in also. Add a quart of *cold* water, and a teacupful of lump sugar. Let it stand until the sugar is dissolved, then pass through a clean flannel bag, and it is fit for use.

MOTHERS IN COUNCIL.

CONDUCTED BY MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH, AUTHOR OF "MOTHERS AT HOME," ETC.

December 1st, 1896.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—The summer is over, the harvest is ended, and—what have we got to do? Just this. Look around us and gather up the fragments that remain. There they lie all about us. Opportunities for serving God, opportunities for helping our friends—yes, and our enemies too. Chances of putting a bright patch of colour into the life of someone whose lot is cast on the cloudy side; chances of taking up the cross which our Master knows we need to make us more like Him; chances of merry laughter which we lost because we happened to be out of temper; chances of penitent tears which we threw away because we hardened our hearts and wouldn't be sorry for our wrong-doing. Oh, yes, there are heaps of fragments scattered round the path of every one of us. Let us gather them up now, thoughtfully, prayerfully, and make the best of them, before 1896 passes away and adds one more huge block to the prison of *what might have been*. From the fragments we may make a beautiful mosaic for the foundation of the palace of what, by the grace of God, *shall* be.

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Our Puzzle Paragraph.

Here is a question from a young wife which will, I know, make you all want to help her. She has just married a coachman who is an abstainer, but he smokes. His wages are £1 a week, and rooms are found for him over the stable. "Young Wife" wants to know how she should lay out the money which he hands to her every Saturday.

Answers must reach me at 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C., marked "Puzzle Paragraph" on the outside, not later than the 15th of the month. A book valued at 2s. 6d. will be sent to the writer of the best solution of the difficulty.

* * * *

"Sarah" seems a very careful mother. I wonder whether she knows that when milk has been standing, the last few drops at the bottom of the jug should not be used! This is always the most impure part of the milk.

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"Do you approve of Christmas Cards?" My dear "Margaret," of course I do. I approve of anything that helps to make the world brighter and happier. You probably would be horrified if you went for a walk with me in the country and heard me exchanging greetings and jokes with some of the wayfarers. I like the old fashion of greeting on the road. It may be a sign of superior mental abilities to be above such things, but for my part the road seems prettier and the day seems pleasanter for the greetings by the way. And if this holds good in daily life, still more does it when our Lord's birthday is here. By all means send your greetings then, "Margaret," *if you can afford it.* But don't let any thought of what other people do make you run into expense beyond your means, even if it be only twopence.

Try this plan with your cane chairs, "Alice." Turn them upside down and scrub the cane well with soap and water. Put them out-of-doors to dry, and you will find they will be quite tight again, provided none of the canes are broken. That's the *cure* for stretched cane seats; the best *prevention* is to forbid anyone to stand on them.

* * * *

Poor "Judy," I can see by your letter how bitterly you are suffering, but do you really think you do well to be angry? Turn your thoughts back twenty odd years. Did not your mother suffer just the same pain with you? The day comes to every mother when she can no longer be all in all to her boys and girls. We nurse them through infancy, we train them through childhood, we help them through the awkward period of hobbledehoyism; and then we must be content to take a lower place when they come across the man or woman whom they feel to be their other half. And is it not well that it should be so? Of course, many a mother sees all her children die before her, but the rule is that the children should leave the old home and form nests of their own. It is better far, on the whole, than that they should remain with their parents after a certain age. Parents do so seldom understand that Jack and Polly, who are nearly thirty, have really grown up.

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"Annie" must rub the stair-rods with a little whiting and a leather, but she should do them regularly every week, so that they do not get too dirty. I find that brass door-handles need rubbing twice a week to keep them as bright as I like. I don't care twopence myself about the gorgeousness of a house—I always take notice of the little things. If windows and steps are spotless, and all brasses bright, there is a cared-for look about a place which no amount of finery can give alone.

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Never mind what your neighbours say, "Auntie," don't wake the child up, but let her have her sleep out. You may take this as a rule for your guidance with your new charges: Whenever a child does something entirely different from what an ordinary youngster does, there must be a cause for it. Possibly the child needs more sleep for some reason; nature will do her work properly if you will let her, so don't rouse the child. Personally, I do not approve of waking children up at all, and it is one of my small daily troubles that owing to the necessities of school life my boys have to be "called" every morning.

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Poor "Mrs. J.," I wonder how the dear baby is by this time? Roughly speaking, aperient medicines should only be used occasionally. As calomel acts on the liver, so aperients act on the bowels. The pendulum gets a violent push and races to and fro with extra rapidity for a time, then it suddenly stops again, and each time it needs a bigger push to move it. For young babies I find nothing better and safer than a little manna dissolved in water and given daily the first thing in the morning.

"EDITH" wants to know the best way of treating children's teeth. Teach them tooth-brush drill. It is a great mistake to think that little children need not clean their teeth. Buy small brushes for them and for yourself—not the scrubbing-brushes some people delight in, as if their mouths were so many letter-boxes. Let them have any simple tooth powder or paste you like in the morning—that which contains soap by preference—and in the evening let them use plain salt; it cleanses the teeth well and purifies the mouth generally.

* * * *

I congratulate you, "KITTY," on having got "the desire of your heart," in the shape of a big dog. You want me to tell you how to manage it. Briefly, don't overfeed it, don't give it any meat, don't chain it up, don't spoil it. Take it out for at least three miles every day; keep it well supplied with clean water, with a lump of sulphur in the pan; give it a bare bone occasionally, and a bath every week. Follow these directions and you will keep your dog well and sweet.

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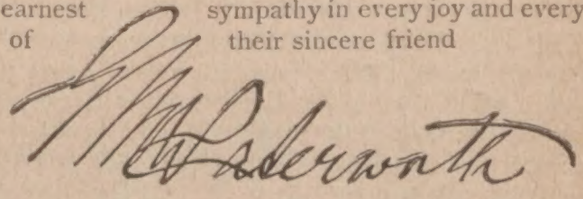
I suspect a good many people who make their own bread once a week can sympathise with the difficulty "MISTRESS" finds in keeping it moist. I advise you all to try this plan. Get a nice clean bag, or sack, and sprinkle it well with flour. Pack the loaves into it, with the top crusts together. If you needs must have some the other way, put a good layer of flour between. Fill up the sack and hang it in an airy place, so that it can swing about. The day before you want a loaf, brush off the flour, and stand it in the larder overnight.

* * * *

Now, before we part, let me wish you all a very merry Christmas and a very happy New Year. I said "merry," and I mean it, for I hold that anyone who can spread innocent laughter is like a certain pen, "a boon and a blessing to men." Next month my Council will be transferred to THE FAMILY FRIEND, in accordance with the arrangement referred to in another part of this number. I hope *all* my readers will follow me to the new council chamber, where they may at all times command the best counsel it is in my power to offer, as well as the earnest sympathy in every joy and every sorrow, of their sincere friend



THE CRADLED KING.

THERE'S a song in the air!
There's a star in the sky!,
There's a mother's deep prayer,
And a baby's low cry!
And the star sparkles bright while the Beautiful sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

There's a tumult of joy
O'er the wonderful birth,
For the Virgin's sweet boy
Is the Lord of the earth!
Ay, the star sparkles bright and the angels loud sing,
For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King!

In the light of that star
Lie the ages impearl'd,
And the song from afar
Has swept over the world.
Every hearth is aflame, and the Beautiful sing,
In the homes of the nations, that Jesus is King!

We rejoice in the light,
And we echo the song
That comes down through the night,
From the heavenly throng.
Ay! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
And we greet in His cradle our Saviour and King!

CHRISTMAS IN THE OLDEN TIME.

WHAT season of the year is so full of bright social interest as merry Christmas! Around this festive time clings a whole host of curious customs which one never tires of recalling. Take even the simple practice of burning the yule log. This quaint usage comes down to us from the Saxons, who, at the yule feast, kindled huge bonfires in honour of their god Thor. In feudal times the cutting of the yule log was the beginning of a series of festivities. Brought into the baronial hall and lighted in the great fireplace, it was the well-understood harbinger of hospitality and kind feeling, of wide-open doors and good cheer.

While the great log was burning, the wassail bowl was passed round. From this each guest drank his neighbour's health—the old Saxon phrase was "hael," meaning "to your health." It was a custom in some places to "wassail" fruit trees by pouring or sprinkling upon them a prepared liquid, with various ceremonies. Says a very old poem:—

"Wassaile the trees that they may beare
You many a plumb and many a peare,
For more or less fruits they will bring,
As you doe give them wassailing."

Substantial viands were not lacking to accompany the favourite Christmas beverage, yet the chief dainty was not anciently, as in later times, the fat turkey or plump goose, but the boar's head was the dish served in baronial halls with greatest ceremony. It was brought in on an immense silver salver—or a golden one, if such were in possession of the host—ornamented with holly and rosemary, and carried by some tall servitor, elaborately dressed, and accompanied by minstrels, singing carols:—

"The boar's head in hand I carry,
Bedecked with bays and rosemary,
And I pray you, my masters, be merry.

"Our steward hath provided this
In honour of the king of Bliss,
Which on this day to be served is."

Serving the boar's head at Christmas is still a custom among certain nations. Another odd dish was the peacock, which, after being stuffed and roasted, was re-adorned with its plumage, and the gilded beak being added and the long tail feathers unfurled, was brought into the hall in great state, and occupied a place of honour on the banqueting table. No servile hands were allowed to touch the proud bird. The noblest lady of the household or some high-born guest prepared it for the table and brought it in.

Of course, the plum-pudding and Christmas pie, and scores of other favourite dishes, were not lacking, among which always appeared the yule cake and frumenty—a preparation of eggs, milk of almonds, and various spices. Possibly some of these viands would not appeal to the more refined palates of the present age.

Turning to the decorations used at Christmas-tide, we find many a curious myth and time-honoured tradition concerning them. The ancient British Druids attached much importance to the plants, trees, and vines which they employed. The mistletoe especially they invested with a peculiarly hallowed and mystic character. They regarded it as an emblem of love, and believed that it typified the beneficent feelings of their gods toward mankind. It is doubtless to this old Druidical association of the mistletoe with love that the English custom, which still obtains, of enforcing the forfeit of a kiss from any woman who is caught under a branch of it at Christmas time, is traceable.

In the old Scandinavian mythology there is told a characteristic fable of this famous Christmas bough, the mistletoe. Balder, the god of poetry and eloquence, and the son of Odin and Friga, one day told his mother that a dream had convinced him he should die by violence. To avert this destiny Friga invoked all the powers of nature—earth, air, fire, water, plants and animals—and made them swear to her an oath that they would not harm her son, who then fearlessly took his place among the gods, and in all their combats fought unharmed amid a shower of arrows. But he had a bitter enemy in the person of a god called Loki, who, convinced that Balder's life was protected by some charm, resolved to fathom it. Disguising himself as an old woman, he visited Friga, and in the course of their conversation casually asked how it was that her son Balder invariably came forth unscathed from all the fiercest battles of the gods. Friga told him how she had invoked the powers of nature in Balder's behalf, but added that she had neglected the mistletoe, which she had regarded as too insignificant to harm him. Leaving her, Loki straightway made from a mistletoe bough an arrow, with which Balder was slain by a blind god called Hecla.

According to an old tradition, the Cross used at the Crucifixion was constructed from a mistletoe tree, which then flourished in the forest, but after that it only existed in the parasitical form in which we know it now.

There can be no doubt that the beautiful red-berried holly was chosen as a decoration for its suggestion of the Crucifixion, while the bay and fir were adopted from Roman uses. The Christmas-tree, now hardly absent from any English home during the festival, is the most modern accessory of the season. It has been introduced from Germany during the reign of our present Queen. With this exception, it is singular to note that nearly all our Christmas customs and usages can be traced back to the earliest years of the Christian era.

W. G.

A MOTHER'S RESPONSIBILITY.

BY MRS. LAURETTA KRESS, M.D.

ONCE attended a large meeting in a pavilion, and I noticed a lady sitting not far from me with a little child by her side, probably four years of age. The little one became a trifle restless—for the seats were hard, with only one board across the back—and accidentally fell backward to the ground. The mother became angry in a moment, picked up the poor, frightened child, shook her severely, and set her down with force enough to make the matter very impressive upon the child's memory. The question came to my mind, How would that mother have liked to be placed in similar circumstances, with similar treatment?

Now, dear mothers, think you that such a lesson will ever be forgotten by that child? No! no! and in after years the child is apt to reflect a similar image.

We do not half realise our responsibility as mothers to our children. The child learns by seeing and hearing others. And the mother stands in a position to lead her children heavenward, or to lead them to destruction.

We often hear it said, when a child has done wrong, or gone astray, that it had the best of training; but how can this be? Isn't it natural for people to imitate others? Is not the mother the first teacher? and does she not have the very best opportunity of putting good into her child's mind, before it can possibly learn evil? Where is the wrong, then, in the training of the child that goes astray? It must be nearly always in the earliest teaching.

In what ways do children reflect the mother's image? In every act she performs; in each word she speaks; in careless habits not corrected; in cross words spoken to them; in rude manners and selfishness. They also imitate kind words, cheerful words, tenderness, unselfishness, true courtesy, pleasant manners.

Sometimes these tender plants so yearn for better lives that they draw nourishment from a loving heavenly Father, when their childish faith is directed to Him by a dear teacher or a kind friend. This, then, brings the greater responsibility, for the mother should be first to teach her child. The teaching of children begins in the mother's arms and needs much consecration. "The mother's work is such that it requires continual advancement in her own life, in order that she may lead her children to higher and still higher attainments."

These things being true, dear mothers, let us work while it is day; let us seek God for wisdom, knowing that the promise has been given that He will give to those who ask Him.

AN ACCEPTED ATONEMENT.

BY JENNIE CHAPPELL, AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS OF THE SITUATION," ETC.

"YOU go, Lizzie, girl, same as you always do; and jest leave the bird to me. You know Christmas won't be Christmas to you without you're with 'em. And they'll be expectin' you."

"Yes, they will be expecting me," returned Lizzie Harkness, thoughtfully. "And depending on my help to cut up the pudding."

"To be sure! Well, as I said, you go, and if I don't turn out this 'ere duck fit for the Queen's own table, I'll—well, I'll eat it, ha, ha!"

So Mrs. Harkness put on her bonnet and shawl, and set out for the Short Street Mission Hall, where every Christmas Day for years past she had been present to assist at the distribution of dinners to poor families in the neighbourhood. "He do spoil me, and that's a fact!" she whispered to herself as she trudged through the snow, a happy smile making her pinched face quite beautiful. "He knows how I count on my bit of Christmas, and he wouldn't have me lose it for anything. There never was a kinder husband than my Jim."

This poor soul's "bit of Christmas" was indeed a joy to her; and none of those with whom she thus worked ever guessed that she and her husband, in their quiet, patient poverty, had often been more sorely in need of seasonable cheer than many of the clamorous applicants for charity whom she helped to serve. This Yule-tide, however, was to be for the Harknesses a season of great festivity, for a distant friend had sent them a present of a duck, the roasting of which, as we have seen, had been undertaken by Jim himself.

Cold roast beef, with bread, hot potatoes, and plum pudding, was the fare provided by friends of the Mission for the needy poor, and it was taken away to the folks' own homes to be eaten. Old and young, men, women and children, came to fetch the dinners, with all sorts and conditions of receptacles to put them in: baskets, bags, pans, basins, wrappers, and, it was rumoured, on one occasion a pillow-case, and on another a bird-cage, were pressed into service for the conveyance to a large family of their bulky share in these good things! But Lizzie Harkness was always most interested in the child-messengers who so greatly preponderated in the crowd; and to-day she was especially touched by the strenuous endeavours of a small creature of about seven years old, to stow into her battered basket dinners for five, and stagger away with the burden, hindered rather than helped by the two still smaller creatures who had come with her "to carry something."

"Stop a minute!" said Mrs. Harkness to this mite. "We're just done. I'm coming your way, and I can help you along a bit. I'm afraid you'll drop half the things on the road."

Lizzie was always kind to children; but this was not merely an impulse of a womanly heart. She sought occasion to be kind; she denied herself to do so; she did it constantly and unweariedly, and of set purpose; and she was particularly good to little girls. It was a "fruit meet for repentance," an act of atonement for a deed which caused her life-long regret, a sin which, under pressure of direst want, she and her husband had committed twenty years before. Wrapped up warmly and with a bottle of milk at its lips, they had left their first and only child on the steps of St. Jude's Church,

"'Jest leave the bird to me.'"

just before service time on Christmas Eve, and themselves tramped unencumbered into the country to search for work.

Bitterly, with tears and heart-wrung prayers, had Mrs. Harkness sought forgiveness for this deed. She believed that she had received Divine pardon, but the scar would ever remain. Years of such kindness and service as one very poor person could render to other people's children might somewhat ease the aching of her heart, but it could never atone. She had cast away God's gift, and she felt she must walk an unblessed woman to the end of her life.

She carried little Kate's heavy basket to the door of the child's home, listening to her regrets meanwhile that mother would not be able to enjoy any of the lovely dinner, for she was too ill to eat beef. Then Mrs. Harkness hastened back to her husband with a new resolution in her heart.

"That poor thing!" she said, sympathetically. "Now I shouldn't wonder if she might fancy just a shave or two of the breast of our duck—and you've done it, Jim, a perfect picture, that you have! And how pleased little Kitty would be!"

Jim did not oppose this kind suggestion, and before sitting down to their own savoury meal, Mrs. Harkness had conveyed between two plates several slices of delicate meat to the bedside of the invalid, whose grateful thanks amply rewarded her; and both husband and wife deemed the incident at an end.

But on the following day a visitor called to see them, a lady-like girl who said she was Kate's Sunday-school teacher, and had come at the request of Kate's mother to tell them how much good that bit of duck had done her, and that she had felt better ever since. "She thought she did not half thank you yesterday," explained the visitor, "she was so taken aback. So I said I'll call. My name is Juda Churchstone, and I live—I'm lady's-maid at Mrs. Grey's."

She was a bright girl, like a bit of sunshine coming into the place, and she stayed and chatted with the Harknesses for some time. When she went away, Mrs. Harkness held her hand detainingly, and gazed long into her fresh young face. "Good-bye, Miss Churchstone," she said slowly. "If you could find time to look in and see us again, we should be so glad."

"I will, then," answered the girl, readily. "Mrs. Grey is very kind and I have an evening every week. I daresay you are wondering at my strange name," she added—"most people do. But I was found when a baby on the stones of St. Jude's Church, somewhere in London, and the friends who took care of me called me so in memory of it."

* * * * *

It seemed too wonderful to be true! "A marracle," Jim Harkness called it, and his wife knew that it was an answer to her tears and prayers. There could be no reasonable doubt that pretty Juda was their long-lost child; and she, longing for some one of her very own to tend and care for, was little disposed to dispute their claim. She left her situation, and assisted by Mrs. Grey, worked up a nice little dressmaking connection, through which she was able to supply her parents with every comfort needed by their declining years. As Mrs. Harkness and her husband went down the sunset slope of life together, with a cheery young presence by their side, loved and forgiven, the mother knew that her feeble but patient attempt at atonement had been accepted not only on earth, but also in heaven.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

WITH this issue THE MOTHERS' COMPANION ceases to exist as a separate magazine, Messrs. S. W. Partridge and Co. having made arrangements to incorporate it from January next with their older and well-known penny monthly periodical, THE FAMILY FRIEND.

May we express the hope that every mother who has been in the habit of regularly subscribing to THE MOTHERS' COMPANION will transfer her allegiance to THE FAMILY FRIEND? It will be found that the latter magazine contains many features to which *Mothers' Companion* readers have been accustomed; and our subscribers will doubtless be pleased to know that arrangements have been made with MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH to continue her interesting and popular "Mothers in Council" papers in THE FAMILY FRIEND, and with many other favourite authors to contribute articles of a purely domestic interest. We feel sure, therefore, that those of our readers who will favour us by ordering the January number of THE FAMILY FRIEND will be pleased with the magazine when they see it, and will admit that they are really gainers rather than losers by the change that has been effected.

We take this opportunity of heartily thanking our readers for their cordial support in the past, and for the many expressions of sympathy and good-will with which they have cheered and encouraged us from time to time; and we venture to hope that they will still continue to support us by acting on the suggestion we have made, and transferring their MOTHERS' COMPANION subscriptions to THE FAMILY FRIEND, which they will find to be in large part simply THE MOTHERS' COMPANION under another name, but having wider aims and more varied interests.

We should like to state that the January number of THE FAMILY FRIEND will contain, amongst its many unique attractions, the opening chapters of an entirely new and deeply interesting serial story by MARIE ZIMMERMANN; "Mothers in Council," by MRS. E. M. WATERWORTH; a helpful, religious paper on starting the New Year, by the REV. WILLIAM PIERCE; "Life on a Training Ship," by F. M. HOLMES; "When Should a Young Man Marry?" "Practical Hints on Family Ailments"; "The Sweeping Day"; a character sketch, with portrait, of "Ian Maclaren"; a splendid short complete story by ALBERT E. HOOPER, entitled "A New Beginning"; "A Happy Temper"; "Things Here and There"; "Temperance Echoes"; "Mission Gleanings," and "Notes about Needlework," with three illustrations of tasty garments for home dressmakers. Printed on superior paper, and beautifully illustrated throughout, it will thus be seen that THE FAMILY FRIEND deserves the hearty support of every mother.

HINTS ON HOME DRESSMAKING.

BY A PRACTICAL DRESSMAKER.

"OH, the cold and dreary winter!" cries the poet. That depends. Provided one is properly clothed, the cold can be defied; and as to the dreariness, even that may be brightened by cheery needlework. Then we have Christmas in sight, and this gay time must be provided for. By the way, blouse bodices will play an important part on festive occasions. Handsome grenadines, mousseline-de-laines, barèges, and canvas are freely patronised, gauze, chiffon, and lace coming into requisition as trimmings.

Fig. 40.

Double-breasted jacket bodices showing a silk or lace front, or those open from the throat to the waist and with revers, cuffs, and collar of silk or velvet, are the styles most admired for winter dresses.

For outdoor wear sacque jackets seem likely to be much in favour. Of these, two styles prevail. The one is arranged with shoulder and under-arm seams only, and has a double box-pleat in the centre of the back, while the fronts have three pleats each side to meet in the centre, where it fastens invisibly with hooks. The neck is completed with a high collar band, and to the upper edge of this square tabs are secured, being interlined with French canvas. A bishop sleeve is used, gathered into the armhole, and also into a cuff of the material at the wrist.

The other style is arranged with a pointed yoke back and front, on which the material is mounted in deep pleats. These yokes are frequently made of velvet or some material that contrasts with the cloth. When velvet or satin is employed for these coats it is necessary to have a quilted lining.

Children are also wearing sacque coats, and look very well in them. Some of these are made double-breasted, with collar, revers, and wristband to a bishop sleeve, of a darker coloured velvet edged with the cloth employed for the coat; while others have straight fronts fastened with pearl buttons, and turned back with revers faced with velvet or satin, and the back is cut with a box-pleat.

Fig. 41.

One of the most convenient patterns we have seen for a shower-proof or cloth mantle is that arranged with pelerine sleeves, making it very easy to slip on even over another garment. The fronts are cut the whole length of the mantle, while the back is arranged into a pointed yoke; over this the large loose sleeve is arranged so as to fit round the armhole and into the neck from the shoulder seam, like a cape or pelerine.

All kinds of fur are again being utilised for trimmings on outdoor garments. Bear and chinchilla look charming on stout cloths of contrasting colour, especially if used as adornments rather than over-lavishly laid on.

Fig. 40. This pattern is after the order of the tailor-made gown, and has revers and cuffs of velvet, the body being open from the throat to the waist. The silk front is set on to the fitting body lining and fastens invisibly down the front with hooks. The basque which commences at the side seam is cut in one with the body. The sleeve is of gigot order, not so high and full on the shoulder as formerly worn. This sleeve seems still to hold its own, the really tight sleeve being longer coming into general use than was anticipated.

Fig. 41. This neat pelisse is all that can be desired for a little girl from one to five years of age. Woollen stuff with a stockinette back of a deep fawn shade is the material used. The short-waisted bodice reaches about four inches below the armhole and can be made in one piece, with seams on the shoulders only. The skirt should be moderately full and long; the absurd fashion of making these pelisses reach to the ground is a very uncomfortable one so far as children are concerned. Sateen or silk can be used for lining. If the cloth we mention is used the little collar should be edged with fur or some of the pretty fancy trimmings adapted for the purpose. But when cashmere is employed, as for very young babies, a frill of embroidery of the same material or of lace will look soft and pretty. The sleeve is full, and set into a band at the wrist.

Fig. 42.

Fig. 42 shows a young lady's or elder girl's dress. The material is arranged full over a fitting lining for the bodice and fastens at the back. The collar trimming is made of dark green velvet, and is cut with a point in front and also over the sleeves. It can be edged with lace or beads. Ribbon finishes the back of the neck and also the waist. The sleeve is arranged over a coat-shaped lining, the upper part being interlined with muslin and pleated into the arm-hole.

Flat patterns can be supplied. Figs. 40, 41, and 42, 6½d. each, post free. Address, "M.C. Pattern," 9, Paternoster Row, London, E.C.

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INDEX.

PAGE

Accepted Atonement, An. Jennie Chappell 185
After Many Days. Jacey ... 23
Ammonia, and Some of its Uses. L. O. Cooper 166

Breadwinner, The 85
Bringing Up 36

Cheshire Cheese, A Chat about 152
Child Tribute to Bacchus, The ... 21
Christmas in the Kitchen 181
Christmas in the Olden Time ... 183
Concerning the Care of House-Plants. Amy S. Woods 134, 148
Curious Christening Customs. Clara G. Lewis 165

Do we Starve our Children? ... 52

Fair Rebekah, The. Charlotte Skinner 117
Family Overplusses. Rev. C. Courtenay, M.A. 86
Famous Cradles of Long Ago. Beatrice H. Arden ... 24, 37

Good Humour 155
Good Reference, A 140
Gossiping before Children. Susan Teall Perry 76

Helps for Busy Housewives, 7, 23, 44, 74, 106, 119
Hints on Home Dressmaking, 16, 32, 48, 64, 80, 96, 112, 128, 144, 160, 176, 187
His Mother Made Him 91
Holiday Guest, The. Josepha Crane 107
Homeward Bound 131
"House" and "Home" 55
How Far a Child Travels 103
How Girls can Earn their Living. Clementina Black—
I. Teaching 6
II. Nursing 38
III. As Clerks and Typists ... 102
How to Look Beautiful 74

Jottings from a Nurse's Note-book 44

Lace-makers in Devonshire ... 156
Little White Hand, The 29
Love's Victory. Edith C. Kenyon 165

Making Children Helpful 180

PAGE

"Making" of Poultry, The. Kate M. Macartney 56
Master's Messages to Women, The. Charlotte Skinner—
To the Bereaved Woman ... 26
To the Sinful Woman ... 90
"Me was so Good!" Jacey ... 167
Mistress of the Situation. Jennie Chappell ... 1, 17, 33, 49, 65, 81
Mother Indeed, A. Jennie Chappell 136
Mothers in Council. Conducted by Mrs. E. M. Waterworth 14, 31, 46, 62, 78, 94, 110, 126, 143, 158, 174, 182
Mothers of Great Men 39
Mother's Prayers, A. Susan T. Perry 138
Mother's Responsibility, A ... 184
Mrs. Aylmer's Denial. M. B. Manwell 77
Mrs. Hallaway's Maid-servant. Edith C. Kenyon 13
Mrs. Tom. M. B. Manwell ... 173
My Happy Possessions—My Song. Charlotte Skinner 150
My Lady's Promise. M. B. Manwell 140

Needless Sacrifice, A. Margaret E. Sangster 30
Novel Notions 11, 27, 42, 59, 71, 92, 103, 124, 139, 171

Off with an Emigrant Party. F. M. Holmes 40
Old Hungarian Work. Josepha Crane 53
On Saying "Yes" 28
Ostrich Farms and Feathers. Constance L. Watson 88
Our Bedrooms. Mrs. Richmond 170
Our Last Quarrel 155
Over-Fondness 175

Perils by Fire. Mrs. Richmond ... 10
Plea for Sleepy-Heads 4
"Polly Smith, Cripple" 125

Rational Dress and its Prospects. Florence Staepoole 70
Rickets, A Talk about. Gordon Stables, M.D. 81
Royal Worcester Porcelain. Betha Farr 8

Sally's Scheme. F. E. Burch ... 45
Shall Baby Mind? Eva J. Marsden 12
Some Courtships by Proxy ... 68

PAGE

Something about Salt. C. J. Hamilton 166
Spinning and Weaving, A Chat about. A. M. Clive Bailey ... 120
Straight Talk, A 171
String of Pearls, A. Eliza F. Pollard 97, 113, 129, 145, 161, 177
Suggestion, A 39
Sunday Problem, A. A. A. Whitfield 122

Visit to Babies' Castle, A. Gladys Fenton 72

"Where the Shoe Pinches." C. J. Blake 69
"Will you laugh to me again, Mother?" 109
Women of Worth. Isabel S. Robson—
Mrs. Josephine Butler ... 8
Mrs. C. F. Alexander 43
Mrs. Bryson 75
The Baroness Burdett-Coutts 93
Mrs. Blackie 123
Word to Working-Girls' Mothers, A. Margaret Meredith 172
Work of Genius, A. Jennie Chappell 104

POETRY.

Baby's First New Year. M. E. R. 9
Birds' Wings in Church 119

Children's Room, The 23
Consolation 69
Cornelia's Jewels. J. R. Eastwood 28
Cradled King, The 183

Easter Morning. Mary Wyeth ... 52

Going to Sleep 170

"He took them up in His arms." M. S. Haycraft 68
Her Poem 70
Hymns She Sang, The 135

Kindly Heart, The 111

Life's Summer-Time. Shirley Wynne 101
Little Hand, A 15
Little Lad's Answer, The 92

My Old Umbrella. Elsie Hackling 7

Over the Way 154

Wicked World, The 135

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